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SUBJECT: EUR DAS BRYZA'S MEETINGS WITH ARF/DASHNAKTSUTIUN

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11. (C) EUR DAS Matthew Bryza's meeting on August 8 with ARF/Dashnaktsutiun leaders Vahan Hovhannisian and Giro Manoyan indicated this leading opposition group remains skeptical about President Sargsian's efforts to negotiate reconciliation with Turkey and an end to the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh (NK). They are concerned about the continued belligerence expressed by President Aliyev and the apparent backing away from normalization of relations by Turkey. ARF reiterated their opposition to surrendering any land as part of the NK process, claiming NK would never be secure against attack, and highlighted the President's limited room for maneuvering. Bryza emphasized the importance the negotiators are placing on the security of NK and the Lachin Corridor, and the need for President Sargsian to have sufficient political space to work out an agreement. END SUMMARY.

DOUBTING ALIYEV'S INTENTIONS

12. (C) Vahan Hovhannisian, head of the ARF/Dashnaktsutiun faction in the National Assembly, and Giro Manoyan, head of the party's Department on Armenian Causes, expressed concern about the continued belligerence of GOAJ officials. Hovhanissian insisted that there has been no change in the position of either President Sargsian or the ARF regarding settlement of the NK dispute. Both are in deep doubt about the GOAJ's intentions, and their concerns were not allayed by the recent GOAJ response to remarks by Nikolai Bordyuzha, Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), who said there was no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the NK conflict, and that an attack on NK would be an attack on Armenia and therefore against all CSTO members. The GOAJ responded that an attack by Azerbaijan on NK would not be an attack on Armenia -- merely a restoration of order in its own territory, currently occupied by Armenia.

CALL AZERBAIJAN'S BLUFF ON WAR?

13. (C) Hovhannisian suggested the GOAM should call Aliyev's bluff when he hints at starting another war over NK; Hovhannisian predicted Armenia would win again, there would be great loss of life, and the peace process would be set back 50 years. Aliyev's saber-rattling has created a more defiant mood in Armenia, he asserted. A new generation has grown up with little direct memory of the NK war, and may take a casual view of the costs of a renewed conflict. Hovhannisian added that most of the Karabakhi generals with whom he had spoken recently believe another war between Armenia and Azerbaijan would not be a conventional war between armies, but a total war between nations. It would have no front, no commanders, and no governments able to stop it. With many Armenians having little to lose economically (more so than with Azerbaijanis living comfortably in Baku, he suggested), many would join the cause, including many

Diaspora Armenians in Russia and the U.S. who have written him asking how they could be conscripted into military service in the event of another war.

14. (C) Hovhannisian suggested President Sargsian should promote a treaty on non-use of force for resolving the NK dispute. This would force Aliyev to back off his continued belligerent statements and would help relieve much of the tension between the countries. Aliyev must understand that such statements will not benefit Azerbaijan and only strengthen the resolve of the Armenian people.

15. (C) Bryza insisted that Aliyev understands war would be disastrous for all parties, including for Azerbaijan and its energy and other commercial interests. He noted that prior to his July 17 meeting in Moscow with President Sargsian, President Aliyev's appearance on Russian TV marked the beginning of his effort to prepare Azerbaijan's population for a peaceful settlement of the conflict according to the Basic Principles. Bryza noted it was not appropriate for the GOAJ to make belligerent statements, but he expressed hope that this was merely posturing ahead of the endgame on the basic principles. He added that when the GOAM resists the temptation to react to Aliyev's belligerence, the Minsk Group co-chairs get more latitude in which to work on a settlement.

STATUS OF NK AND LACHIN CORRIDOR

16. (C) With regard to the status of NK and the Lachin Corridor, Hovhannisian said giving NK and the Lachin Corridor "interim" status is fine, but in fact must represent an irrevocable recognition that they are no longer part of Azerbaijan. It is not an option to leave open the possibility of them reverting to Azerbaijan -- you "cannot

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give Baku the scissors," Hovhannisian remarked. Bryza replied that granting NK interim status is significant, as it reflects implicit recognition by Azerbaijan that NK may not be part of Azerbaijan.

17. (C) With regard to the proposed width of the Lachin Corridor, Bryza insisted that this decision needs to be based on technical, not political factors, or it will never be accomplished. As the agreement would allow only small arms and light weapons in the territories surrounding the corridor (which Armenia would return to Azerbaijan), the corridor would need to be wide enough that those arms could not fire on the roadway connecting NK and Armenia; with any agreement likely to include demilitarization of the surrounding territories, this should ensure the security of the corridor. Bryza noted that even Aliyev now recognizes that Karabakhi Armenians need to feel safe or they will flee and there would be no viable resolution of the conflict. Bryza noted, however, that it is politically difficult for Aliyev to agree that the Lachin Corridor will have the same status as NK, as that would be seen as potentially ceding another part of Azerbaijan's territory to Armenia.

LITTLE POLITICAL SPACE FOR PRESIDENT

18. (C) Saying the ARF consider Azeris "Turks," (i.e. "genocide makers"), Hovhannisian reiterated the ARF's opposition to Armenia ceding any land to Azerbaijan as part of the NK process, asserting that territories around NK serve as a security belt against future attacks by Azerbaijan. Bryza noted that in NK many say they will not cede any land for which Armenia lost lives. If this is the position, there is no point in holding negotiations, he responded; while it is essential to guarantee the security of NK and the surrounding territories, each side will have to give something up to make a deal.

¶9. (C) Manoyan suggested that President Sargsian has little political space in which to act, not only because of ARF resistance to concessions, but simply because he has few allies. There is no agreement among parties in the opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC) except in their desire to unseat President Sargsian. Hovhannisian said it was a mistake for the GOAM ever to say it would give up land, and wondered how the President can ever sell to the Armenian people what he is doing. Bryza responded that President Sargsian needs political space to make the compromises that he and Aliyev will ultimately need to make to secure a peaceful NK settlement. Everybody in the Armenian body politic -- from Levon Ter-Petrosian when he was President, to Vartan Oskanian ("father" of the Madrid Principles as Foreign Minister) to the ARF when they were in the governing coalition -- has made a contribution to the NK process, and therefore cannot disown a final settlement that is likely to reflect all of those contributions.

MADRID PRINCIPLES

¶10. (C) Bryza insisted that under the Basic Principles as outlined in the Madrid Document, all transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan would be reopened. While he agreed with Hovhannisian that this is not explicitly stated in the six principles announced in the fact sheet issued in conjunction with the July 10 joint declaration on NK by Presidents Obama, Sarkozy, and Medvedev, Bryza asserted that it is reflected in the Madrid Document, which would restore Armenia's trade ties to Turkey and Azerbaijan.

TURKEY: USG NOT PRESSURING ANY ONE SIDE

¶11. (C) With respect to Turkey, Bryza reiterated that the USG goal remained an open border on terms mutually agreeable to Armenia and Turkey. He insisted that the USG is not putting pressure on the GOAM to reach a settlement or make unacceptable compromises such as agreeing to an historical commission; indeed, Turkish officials often blame the USG for putting pressure on them as well.
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